



MEDIA RELEASE

Fraud Alert

The Grandparent Scam

SANTA BARBARA, CA – March 7, 2013

A well-known type of fraud that targets the elderly, known as the Grandparent Scam, is once again occurring in Santa Barbara. The Santa Barbara Police Department is asking citizens to beware and to share this information with elderly family members and friends so that they will not become the next victims of this crime.

In variations of the Grandparent Scam an elder is contacted by telephone by someone purporting to be their grandchild or other relative. The elder is told that their grandchild is in a foreign country or other faraway place and is in some sort of legal trouble; such as having caused an injury traffic accident, and is about to be jailed. The grandchild states that in order to avoid incarceration he or she needs to pay a sum of money, usually several thousand dollars, to cover bail, fines, or legal fees. The elder is asked provide the money and is instructed to mail cash or transfer funds via Western Union or similar service to a distant address, usually overseas. In some instances another person involved in the scam, usually one purporting to be the grandchild's attorney, also speaks to the elder to further convince them of the need to immediately wire funds to prevent their grandchild from going to jail.

Recently in Santa Barbara one elder lost \$6,500.00 and another lost \$6,200.00 to this fraud. In those instances the victims sent their money to perpetrators in Canada.

Anyone who receives a phone call of this nature should be suspicious and should do the following to avoid being scammed:

- Resist the pressure to act immediately
- Attempt to independently contact your grandchild or contact another relative to determine if the call is legitimate
- Never wire money based on a request made over the phone or via e-mail
- When concerned about the welfare of an overseas relative, before sending money contact the State Department's Office of Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747 for assistance

Additional information about the Grandparent Scam can be found at the following links:

http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2012/april/grandparent_040212

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/financial_scams/financial_scams_5608.html

<http://consumerfed.org/pdfs/Grandparent-Scam-Tips.pdf>

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